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COMMENTS

EXPERIENCES IN COLLECTING BILLS

Many water-works superintendents advocate legislation making charges for water used a lien on the property. From the viewpoint of the water-works operator such legislation is doubtless desirable. Occasionally charges arise entirely beyond the scope and power of legal procedure.

An instance of this kind recently occurred in Philadelphia, as an accompaniment of one of the rapidly increasing cases of damage to a fire hydrant by a recklessly driven automobile. To the credit of the Police Department a report of the accident with the number of the automobile license was turned in to the Bureau of Water, and a bill in the amount of approximately $60 was rendered to the registered owner of the vehicle. No check being forthcoming, a search disclosed the fact that the owner of the automobile was with the United States Army in France in the service of the Government, and still further investigation brought to light the fact that the soldier, when entering the Government service, had laid up his car for storage in a garage. The garage owner was then investigated and was able to satisfy the Bureau that he had no knowledge of the car having been taken out on the street. Further investigation, however, developed the fact that an employee of the garage, entirely unauthorized, had been out on a joy-ride with the automobile, during which he had collided with the fire hydrant. Search for the employee brought to light the fact that he was dead. The Water Bureau then demanded settlement of the claim from the executor, and this individual responded with the advice to "go to the devil." The whole transaction was then referred to the City Solicitor who returned the claim with the comment that hell and the devil were out of his jurisdiction.

Carleton E. Davis.

THE AUTO TRUCK PERIL FOR THE POST HYDRANT

A new problem has appeared for the water-works engineers and superintendents in the destruction of post hydrants by the heavy auto trucks which are now so generally used throughout the country.

Hydrants are so located with reference to the curb line that there is no danger of their being damaged by a horse-drawn truck, but the substitution of auto trucks for horse-drawn trucks has created an entirely different situation. In the winter time, when the street is covered with snow or ice, especially the latter, an auto truck skidding in turning the corner will slide up over the curb and strike a hydrant with sufficient force to break it off, usually at or about the ground line. At all times of the year an auto truck is liable to back up to the curb without paying much attention to the overhang, and on account of the weight and power in the truck, will break off a hydrant, and the driver may hardly be conscious of having struck any obstacle. If a hydrant is placed in a vault, such as is frequently the case with the high-pressure hydrants in the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York, the hydrant branch may be ruptured in place of the hydrant itself. Such an occurrence was the cause of the flooding of the basement of the Postal Telegraph Building, where many thousands of dollars of damage resulted.

The experience in New York has indicated that the strength of the hydrant cannot be made sufficient to prove an effective answer to the problem. High-pressure hydrants, which are $10\frac{7}{16}$ inches in diameter and have a thickness of metal of $\frac{15}{16}$ inch, have been broken as well as the much lighter low-pressure or ordinary type of hydrant.

There are several possible answers to be made to the problem presented. Some will advocate the flush hydrant, which, to date, has not made appreciable progress in this country. In Boston, where both flush and post hydrants are used, the troubles resulting